

Chapter 13

He's an athlete, the woman thought as the naked man sprinted in front of her horse.

"We might be running into overtime tonight." She spoke to her horse as he snaked through the woods, head low, focused upon the man he had been set to chase. She allowed the man to stay well in front wanting him to feel he had a chance.

The preacher altered his direction, and the woman realized he must have seen the old cabin at the woods' edge. Multiflora rose bushes had staked a major claim to the structure, wrapping it in a thick tangle of piercing thorns.

He fell into the door like it was home base, struggling to get a grip on the door through the thorns. It held firm. He yanked and kicked at the door. He rammed it with his shoulder, crying out when the thorns bit into his flesh. Rusty hinges screeched as the door gave way and the man somersaulted inside. The woman vaulted from the saddle as the horse slid to a stop.

"Don't you know 'vengeance is mine, says the lord,' preacher?" The woman quoted the Bible.

"What have I done?" The man's muffled voice asked.

"Drape your slimy arms around little girls." The woman frowned. The voice didn't sound at all winded. "I know your kind." She heard the sounds of something being dragged across the wood floor. She tried pushing against the door he had slammed shut, but the thorns tore at her bare hands. The little game was fast losing its enticement. Seeing the terror in his face was by far the best part. Interesting how insignificant he became when he shed his clothes and stood trembling in front of her, pleading for mercy, embarrassed with his puny white body. "Puny" wasn't the right word, she admitted. "Adonis" kept floating through her mind ever since he stood naked before her in the barn.

She still sense a stirring coursing her body at the memory of his broad shoulders and muscular biceps and pecs. But the memory of what she had seen the fully-clothed preacher do brought her back to the job at hand.

"Preacher?" What was he up to? She heard him moving around inside.

Then silence.

Did he have a heart attack or something? Damn. "You're making me mad, Preacher." She didn't like losing control of her little party one bit. Yanking the lariat off the saddle she tied one end to the door, the other to her saddle. In one quick motion, she swung into the saddle and jabbed her spurs into her horse's side. He leapt forward, quickly taking up the slack in the rope. The door popped open in a spray of splintering wood. She spun the horse on his hindquarters and sprinted back. Taking the 380 semi-automatic out of the holster, she leaned forward in the saddle, peering into the dark cabin.

Then she saw the gaping hole where the window should be. Shit! She darted to the back side of the cabin and scanned the hay field stretching out for acres.

She spotted him racing toward the river. She spurred her horse into a gallop, gaining on the naked man with every step. An uneasiness nipped at the woman at the possibility of the preacher escaping.

She saw him hesitate at the river's edge and turn to face her. Hoping to wing him, she fired her gun.

Missed! She fired again. Simply not good enough to hit her target while on a galloping horse.

"Damn!" She hauled her horse to a stop and watched the man dive into the river.